

Public Forum Debate

Basic Forensics

What is public forum debate?

- Style of debate compared to a nationally-televised debate, like *Crossfire*.
- Debaters argue an issue of national importance in terms that a "common" or "lay" person would understand.
- Teams of two alternate speeches for their side.
- Successful debaters make persuasive and logical arguments that is accessible to a wide variety of audiences.

How does public forum debate work?

- The debate round starts with a coin flip:
 - Winner chooses either the speaking order or pro/con side of the issue.
 - Loser decides the other
 - Example: winning team chooses pro side, the losing team decides speaking order
- Public forum debate involves three types of speeches:
 - **Constructive** speech (team builds their argument for/against the issue)
 - **Rebuttal** speech (team refutes opponent's arguments)
 - **Summary** speech (closing argument/last shot speech)
- Crossfire round: Teams question each other in order to reveal weaknesses in each other's arguments.
 - Each debate round has three chances for crossfire
- **All speakers speak at a podium facing the audience.**

Speech and timing schedule

Team A: First Speaker: Constructive Speech: 3 minutes
Team B: First Speaker: Constructive Speech: 3 minutes

Crossfire: Between first speakers only: 2 minutes

Team A: Second Speaker: Rebuttal: 3 minutes
Team B: Second Speaker: Rebuttal: 3 minutes

Crossfire: Between second speakers: 2 minutes

Team A: First Speaker: Final Focus: 2 minutes
Team B: First Speaker: Final Focus: 2 minutes

Grand crossfire: All speakers: 2 minutes

Constructive Speeches (First speakers only--3 minutes)

- First speakers give arguments for or against the topic, depending on which side the team is speaking for.
- Material is prepared in advanced and memorization is not required.
- Constructive speeches must correctly cite at least three sources.
- Constructive speeches are usually given by the least confident/least experienced team member.

First Crossfire (first speakers only--2 minutes)

- Crossfire begins after both constructive speeches have been given.
 - Team A's first speaker will ask the first question of Team B's first speaker.
 - Other team members are not permitted to talk during this crossfire.
 - Functions like a cross-examination, teams may attack each other arguments and question the AREs of the other team.

Rebuttal Speeches (second speakers only--3 minutes)

- Rebuttal speeches serve two functions:
 - Refute all arguments of the opponent's constructive speech.
 - Use the 4-step refutation method
 - Must address EACH argument
 - Use disadvantage/counterplan, attack AREs, sources.
 - Build up your team's arguments.
 - Introduce new AREs to the debate.
 - Repeat and emphasize existing AREs from your constructive speech.

2nd Crossfire (second speakers only--2 minutes)

- Crossfire begins after both constructive speeches have been given.
 - Team A's second speaker will ask the first question of Team B's second speaker.
 - Other team members are not permitted to talk during this crossfire.
 - Functions like a cross-examination, teams may attack each other arguments and question the AREs of the other team.

Final Focus Speech (first speakers only--2 minutes)

- Each team is given one last chance to explain exactly why his/her team has won the debate.
- No new arguments may be introduced, but new evidence for previous arguments may be used.
- Review major arguments for your team's side of the debate, and explain why your opponent's arguments are not good enough to win the debate.
- Ask the judge to vote for your team.

Grand Crossfire (All debaters--2 minutes)

- All four debaters can ask and answer questions of each other.
- The speaker who gave the first final focus speech can ask the first question.

Prep Time

- Each team has a total of two minutes of preparation time which they can use before any of their speeches.
- The time can be used to plot arguments or refutations.
- The two minutes can be used in whatever increments the team chooses.
- The team must ask the judge to use their prep time.